C. A. Woolley.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
Boston Public Library

http://www.archive.org/details/apologyforlifeco00wool

d17

AN

APOLOGY

FOR THE

LIFE AND CONDUCT

OF

Mrs. MARY WRIGHTEN,

LATE

A FAVOURITE ACTRESS AND SINGER,

OF

DRURY-LANE THEATRE,

AND

VAUXHALL GARDENS.

WRITTEN BY HERSELF,

AND DEDICATED TO HER HUSBAND,

JOHN WRIGHTEN of the ſame Theatre,

In Conſequence of his Perſecution of her for ſeveral Years paſt.

If wives do fall, it is their huſbands faults,
And have they not affections as men have?
Then let 'em uſe us well, elſe let 'em know,
The ills we do, their ills inſtruct us to. SHAKES.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

T.56
.156

ALLEN A BROWN
DEC. 17, 1909

DEDICATION.

TO MR. JOHN WRIGHTEN,

THE following apology is very respectfully dedicated. It is due to him as a debt of honour, which must be paid; and Mrs. Wrighten begs his pardon for not discharging it sooner. The delay is not to be attributed to her want of calling it to remembrance; but to a hope that

he would have forgiven it. His demands have been numerous, and the payment is ſomewhat diſtreſſing. The intereſt ſhe reſerves, aſſured he cannot expect it; although, in point of ſtrict uſury, ſhe admits his title to it. If he be not ſatisfied let him ſpeak out, and he ſhall have an honeſt reply. Every thing here deſignedly omitted, in conſideration to *his* feelings, and *her* charity, which covers a multitude of ſins, ſhall then be expoſed. His *calibre** is great, and he ſhall have a candid hearing. He is the natural father of this pamphlet, lawfully begotten on the body of his wife. It has gone its full time, and having extorted it from its mother

* A French word of Mr. Burke's.

by

by a peremptory mandamus, ſhe now lays it affectionately at his feet. If the likeneſs be good, he will ſoon diſcover who ſat for the picture, and may ſee it in his own dreſſing-glaſs. Diſdaining a deſcent into low particulars, Mrs. Wrighten hath clothed her object in a church-going ſuit. She abounds not in idle anecdote to gratify impertinent curioſity; and defamation flies from her abode. Not any character is mangled by her, nor hath ſhe brought on the ſtage either male or female under falſe appearances. This ſhe leaves to thoſe ingrates, thoſe putters together of nothing, who, unfit for the taſk they ſet themſelves, ſpare neither man nor woman in the diſtortion of

their features. Wholly unuſed to the razor, they chop with a cleaver; and ſtrangers to their ſubjects, they exhibit the daubs of ſign-painters, inſtead of the works of a Maſter. They employ themſelves for bread, and, deſtitute of truth or gratitude, they bring themſelves to ſcorn. *Ingratum ſi dixeris omnia dicis.*

Mrs. Wrighten has ſtriven to make her apology palatable by giving it an agreeable flavour, and ſhe ſaves to herſelf a right of enlarging it as occaſion may require. To thoſe, however, who pry into books for ſecrets be it known, that if they ſearch here for ſcenes of delicious romance, vicious intrigues, or wanton amours, they will be deceived. Nothing but truth

truth in all the nakedneſs of beauty is here to be ſeen. No fiction is called in to catch a greedy attention, or intereſt the reader in worthleſs diſcoveries. No character is convulſed in the drawing*, nor no

* Scandal, like treaſon, is often ſought for as a reliſh, while the defamer and traitor are puniſhed unpitied. Great minds are ſuperior to the former, and they abhor the latter. In regard to the many ſilly ſquibs and libels often ſcattered againſt our fellow-creatures, the late Lord Cheſterfield very happily expreſſed himſelf, in ſaying, "Let fools admire what fools "indite." When we look round the world we find the better the character, the more it is an object for knaves and blockheads to laugh at. But the ſhafts of abuſe are ſo impotent that their efforts may be compared to a pug-dog ſhedding its water on a lion. On the contrary, there are others who, like galled horſes, wince at every touch of character, and dread it as naughty children do the birchen rod. The ancients

inflammatory tale is told to poiſon the paſſions, or lead them aſtray. Such as it is, ſhe hopes it will be well received. It is printed with no ungenerous view, no motive of diſhonour, or proſpect of gain; and having done every thing in her power to make it acceptable to her huſband, to whom ſhe wiſhes no harm; but to whom ſhe recommends the mirror of reflection, ſhe now leaves the victim at the altar, deſirous that he may be the prieſt and make the offering.

ancients dreſſed up their ſacrifices for the altar, and ſuch is the invention of modern calumniators that they give a good name for the ſake of defaming it. Thus is ſcandal a tax that that every one ſome time pays for being eminent, and thoſe who regard it are as vulgar minded, as thoſe who circulate it; even as a receiver of ſtolen goods is as bad as the thief.

PREFACE

THE ends of this Pamphlet are truth and juſtice, diſcuſſed on moral and philoſophical principles.

Had Mr. Wrighten weighed maturely the neceſſary ſteps towards attaining mutual happineſs he would have acted with wiſdom; and have been ſenſible of the perilous conſequences when unbound by obligations, eſſential on his part to ſo glorious a purpoſe. Luſt and avarice are generally the two ſprings that propel a man to marriage. He ſel-

dom

dom thinks of any further happineſs under this ordination; which if he truly conſidered, he would find that his honor, intereſt and peace depended much more on duties belonging to himſelf than her he has thought proper to conſtitute his own.

Every man who becomes a huſband, naturally deſires to live well with his wife; and in proportion to her honor, underſtanding, and good nature, the higher will be the joys that flow in upon him from domeſtic harmony, and a ſweet concurrence of ſentiment with her to whom he is united. But although this is a bleſſing which all aim at, it is lamentable to obſerve how different are the ways of thoſe who purſue it. Luſt or avarice

avarice favors the deception and holds close the mask. Conscious of their own insincerity, great allowances ought to be made by them and the world, for those Fair one's who have bended under its influence; more especially so, as it is universally known that between man and woman the former is not the least dissembler of the two. If such men preserved inviolate the characters after marriage which before they had assumed, they would have little to bewail: but to gratify a fleeting or a sordid passion, which perishes with the hour, they envolve themselves in the snares of remorse, and become sensible that where the beast has been nothing is left worthy the relish of a man. On this

this ſide the grave perfection is not to be found. Nothing therefore ſhould be looked for by mankind that is out of Nature; but they ſhould reciprocally forgive each others infirmities, while they endeavour to correct their own.

What degree of affection can a woman long retain for a man, who having treated her with the moſt fawning ſubmiſſions, while her lover or rather ſuitor, affects to be her maſter, the moment ſhe entitles him to the name of huſband? when inſtead of being humoured and indulged, ſhe diſcovers that ſhe is looked upon little better than a ſervant?

Such a ſad reverſe of behaviour to her will alarm her love, and awaken her

her pride; which may totally extinguiſh every favorable impreſſion he had made on her mind.

A wife who diſcharges the duties of her place wants not any remonſtrance. If ignorant or perverſe ſhe will never be amended by auſterity. Reſiſtance will take place, and the ſilken ties of affection in time be done away, while tenderneſs and compaſſion, with the ſoft whiſpers of kind advice, will make a generous open hearted woman exert every nerve to improve and pleaſe her huſband, who however moroſe and unyeilding, may thus be made flexible and obliging. A haughty ſuperſtitious behaviour from a man whom nothing pleaſes in a wife, leads to great danger.

danger. It renders the good leſs worthy, and infallibly makes the bad much worſe.

Mrs. Wrighten ſpeaks in this manner from experience. If her huſband had acted by her as ſhe ſubmits he ought to have done, ſhe would never have left him but in death. The bliſsful union of hearts diſſolved; diſcord and confuſion prevailed between them; and far as ſhe is now from him, ſhe feels a due concern for his ſubverſion of the beſt ends of marriage—namely to make life glide ſmoothly on; to ſoften a huſband's care, to protect the weakneſs of a wife; to preſerve unmelted the cement of friendſhip, and every thing

elſe

elſe that heaven can beſtow on mortal beings.

Since: ſhe quitted her huſband, of which her readers will find more hereafter, ſhe has heard much of her name, which hath been mentioned with no unexpected variety of ſound. She remembers to have heard of a Cock-lane ghoſt, which excited the attention of the curious, and was afterwards ſucceeded by a Stockwel wonder. Crim con. and adultery have now ſhut the eyes of ſuperſtitious inquiſitors, and the flight of a woman from her huſband, works on the mind of the public nearly as much as a murder or a rape.

Falſe tales are things of quick growth: Set the ſmalleſt ſeed of them

and

and it will ſoon burſt forth in vigorous branches. This Mrs. Wrighten knows in regard to herſelf, and to defeat them is one of her inducements to plead for herſelf. If ſhe be ſucceſsful, her readers will rejoice with her. If not, ſhe truſts in their forgiveneſs, and will never do ſo any more.

AN

APOLOGY

FOR

MRS. MARY WRIGHTEN.

CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE life of an individual is ſo uninteresting to the public,* that it would be a blameable piece of intruſion to lay it before readers of diſcernment without the offer of an apology. Theatrical characters, though denominated public, may poſſibly of all others be deemed leſs worthy the appellation. A Mountebank and his trumpeter;

* Yet ſuch is the force of indiſcretion or vanity, that accounts are publiſhed of the *lives* of worthy men *before* their deaths. If without their knowledge, the authors pay them little compliment. If with it, we cannot but ſmile.

a merry Andrew and a puppet; are public perſonages; and as, like the former, they are generally ſpoken of by the voice of candor, cenſure and criticiſm, independant of their domeſtic conduct, an attempt to reſcue a perſecuted object from wandering obliquy abroad, and to open a *bulletin* of female miſeries at home, may not be unworthy of public attention. In private the taſk of communicating diſtreſſing truths may be eaſy and alleviating, though otherwiſe ineffectual. In public, however well intended, it may nevertheleſs meet with ſecret reprehenſion.

To friends and acquaintances Mrs. Wrighten hath opened her mind as little as can well be conceived by an injured woman; and ſhe is now conſtrained, ſhe hopes with becoming reluctance, to make her caſe publickly known. Yet as injury, diſtreſs

and

and miſery pervade, more or leſs, the dwellings of all human beings, whatever be their ſtations, nothing but an honeſt motive to manifeſt circumſtances of private ingratitude for public inſpection, can juſtify an actreſs and ſinger in ruſhing forward with an hiſtorical ſketch of her conduct from her infancy to the preſent time.

In every boſom, fortified as it may be by philoſophy, reaſon or religion, there may be found ſome lurking pang, and thoſe who hear another's woe may at leaſt commiſerate, if not appeaſe it. Perfect happineſs * is not

* No plenitude of preſent gratification can make the poſſeſſors happy for a continuance, unleſs they have ſomething in reſerve, ſomething to look for. This is ſeen in the ſpirits of thoſe who are engaged in intereſting purſuits, compared to the dejection of thoſe who are born to ſo much that they want nothing, or have uſed their ſatisfaction too ſoon. This carries the rich and great to the horſe courſe and

not attainable. It may be viewed at a diſtance by the eye of imagination, but in the approach we diſcover a monſter or a phantom.

Difficult is the effort to make ſmooth the aſperities of a rough-roaded life, or to avoid the open or hidden ſhafts of ſlander; and as it is the worſt of ſlavery to govern our conduct by the opinions and whiſpers, the ſurmiſes or menaces of others, ſo is it wiſe to make ſelf-approbation, regardleſs of the buſy hum of men, ſtrike the ſtring of joy.

Of thoſe who cannot defy attempts to diſturb their peace; but who droop under what poſſibly does them honor, it may be ſaid they are unſuited to this world. By ſighing and lamenting they compleat the

gaming table; and often engages them in conteſts of which the ſucceſs bears no proportion to the ſolicitude and expence.

work

work of thoſe who hate them; but to glance a ſmile of indifference over the envy and ill will of others proves an enlarged mind; and revenges them ſeverely; leaving a creature as a thing to laugh at, who ſpits its ſpite on thoſe it cannot reach.

Well may it be ſaid, that a contented mind is a continual feaſt; and this ought never to be forgotten or obſcured by the vain hope of poſſeſſing unceaſing bliſs. A perſevering ſatisfaction within, gives but a faint idea of true happineſs; and this is to be found only in thoſe who are bleſſed with ſpirits to bear and forbear, to give and forgive, to improve every little gleam of intermitting joy, and lighten the weight of miſfortune. The all-wiſe Author of nature hath left it in every one's power to enjoy different ſorts of fancied bliſs, and notwithſtanding the ſuppoſed inequalities of com-

ſorts here below, all, except the conſcious guilty, have proportionate ſhares; yet all magnify their own afflictions, unknowing the load that bears down the heads of others; unknowing too that the ſoft hand of time, with ſubmiſſive obedience to human events, will at laſt adminiſter relief to the bleeding wound. Thoſe who ſink under trifles are weak indeed. They fight againſt themſelves with ſelf-created weapons, while others with unruffled ſouls, like Patience on a monument, can ſmile at grief, and weather the ſtorms of diſtreſs. Under the meridian warmth of a cloudleſs temper, virtue, piety and benevolence will diſpel a large miſt of earthly miſery, and like Elyſian flowers flouriſh and triumph even in the neighbourhood of noxious weeds.

With a portion of ſpirits and ſuch a temper

temper therefore, much to be boaſted of but known only to a few, Mrs. Wrighten, ſenſible to the truth of theſe ſentiments, hath long borne up againſt the ſtream of domeſtic ill treatment. She hath never aggravated what ſhe could not remedy. But preſſed by the ſpur of the occaſion after a trial of more than twenty years, when ſhe found it impoſſible longer to oppoſe the mildneſs of reſignation to the boiſterous and flinty behaviour of her huſband, ſhe reſolved by a kind of over-ruling neceſſity to make a public appeal to that impartial tribunal which is able either to condemn with mercy or excuſe with charity. Whatever be the conſequence her rejoicing will be the teſtimony of her conſcience. * Tenacious of doing no harm; careful of and

* For our rejoicing is this, the teſtimony of our conſcience. 2 Cor. v. 12.

affectionate towards her innocent daughters, and properly fearful of just censure, she has studied with humility to submit much in little. *Multum in parvo componere studui*; and by stiffling all the grosser particles of her compound anguish, to put down its author by a round unvarnished tale.

CHAP-

CHAP. II.

BIOGRAPHICAL.

IF it be any credit to deſcend immediately from poor but honeſt parents, who while they labor to live alſo labor to do right, Mrs. Wrighten hath a claim to it ſuperior to thoſe of higher birth; or what is more commonly called family rank, whoſe ideas of perſonal dignity are leſs reſpectful to virtue than thoſe of the vulgar. No merit can be derived from our progenitors. In narrow minds the high ſounding name of a title, a pedigree, or an ancient anceſtry, intoxicates the ideas, and hurries them into pride that brings down ſcorn and contempt; while

while the ſcions of an ordinary houſe laugh at the deſtitution of ſo ridiculous a bauble.

The trueſt mark of honor is virtue, which as it is its own reward, ſo likewiſe is it ſuperior to every other terrene diſtinction. To emulate her in a monarchy like our own is ſure to be attended with the beſt of effects; while an unlimited power of creating gaudy ranks of men will ſerve but to foment private envy and public diſreſpect, even from thoſe commoners who, as in queen Anne's time, rejected a bill from the Lords for confining the peerage to a definite number. The real poſt of honor is a private ſtation, where virtue feeds on itſelf, and thrives by exertion. Titled characters may wiſely form a barrier between the crown and the people, as in Great Britain. So long too as they keep within their due bounds, and encroach not on either

either, they may be called publicly virtuous. But when, as in a neighbouring country, honors are proſtituted to the deſtruction of that equality of rights which is inherent in the very nature of man, leaving in civil ſociety only two ranks of human beings, the great and the little, as if the latter were born only for the former, the heart of goodneſs muſt ſwell with delight at hearing of their downfal.

To begin our biography. Mrs, Wrighten is the daughter of a working jeweller—a man ever juſtly eſteemed for the ſimplicity of his manners, the integrity of his life, and his ingenuity as an artiſt. While a girl, from ten years of age unto her marriage, ſhe was generally known about the neighbourhood of her birth place by the ſtyle and title of the ſprightly Polly Mathews. Her mother, a woman rather violent in her

diſ-

diſpoſition, to defeat the wants of many children and add to the earnings of her huſband, kept a huckſter's ſhop in that part of Hoxton called the Land of Promiſe; but whether it were a ſecond Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, is ſomewhat to be doubted. The neighbourhood of it was mean, and the inhabitants generally poor;—here Mrs. Wrighten was born, and received the humble education of mere reading and writing, until the age of about twelve or fourteen years. As ſhe ſaw little at home to attract her attention amidſt the crying of children, the ſcolding of her parents, and the ordinary avocations to which they were doomed, ſhe ſought her amuſements with her playmates abroad. She was ſcarcely ever domeſticated but at her meals and hours of reſt. This ſoured the tempers of her father and mother; and ſuch

were

were the perſonal ſeverities ſhe received from them that ſhe determined to quit their dominion in the Land of Promiſe, and ſearch out a Piſgah from whence ſhe might ſee it in reality. They had often mortified her by their idle, though perhaps affectionate ſuſpicions, that her acquaintance with ſome young man in their vicinity had abſolutely gone too far, and they reſented it by repeated caſtigations. This growing inſufferable ſhe took her departure from their houſe, unknowing in particular whence to fly for refuge and protection.

Ill guided parents! Paſſion on one hand, and folly on the other, floated them down the rough tide of fury, and want of reflection raiſed their unbridled hands againſt a daughter they loved, merely becauſe they thought her guilty of what the laws of nature might excuſe, and which no corporal

cor-

correction could take away. Had reaſon or religion been at hand they would have mildly remonſtrated on a child's incaution, and, on recollecting the language of the Judge Supreme, have ſaid to her, "Go thou and ſin no more." Had theſe exalted aſſiſtants been preſent they would have known that in forcing a young and giddy creature from their houſe for an imaginary tranſgreſſion, and withholding the ſuccouring hand of kindneſs, they muſt become the cauſe of every condition to which ſhe might be afterwards devoted, and of courſe find *her* wretchedneſs placed at the doors of *their* conſciences. But as every evil hath its attendant good, Mrs. Wrighten in her flight was not loſt. Her ſucceeding welfare in one ſenſe may be attributed to the inconſiderate raſhneſs of her father and mother. Undeſerving of their wrath, and

innocent

innocent of their charge, ſhe found an aſylum in the houſe of an aunt or a grandmother. Here ſhe met with that tender attention to which at home ſhe had long been a ſtranger; and having a very ſweet muſical voice, ſhe inclined her thoughts to the ſcience of ſinging. A maſter was conſidered of to cultivate her taſte, and prepare her for public exhibition. Mr. Griffes an organiſt now came in the way, and to him Polly Mathews was ſoon after apprenticed.

In the firſt two or three years of her pupillage ſhe gave ſtrong proofs of excellence, and that ſhe would ſhortly become an ornament to the ſtage. Before the expiration of her articles ſhe was introduced to Mr. Garrick, who engaged her for his theatre. Her debut gained her great applauſe, which continued to increaſe in proportion

portion to her experience. Frequently mixing with all ſorts of performers from the lamplighter up to king Garrick—the barber to the machiniſt—the worſt of of bad players to the prompter—it may well be ſuppoſed that offers of marriage would flow in abundantly upon her from every underſtrapper of the ſtage, who counted on the pleaſing ſociety of a lively good tempered young woman, but above all the profits of her profeſſion. And now ſtood forward, the redoubted Mr. Wrighten. He had ſome diſcernment, was plauſible, and inclined to be theatrically uſeful. The facetious Polly Mathews was caught by his pretences. She gave him more credit for whom and what he was, than ſhe too ſoon found he deſerved. She hoped to ſecure ſomething like a promiſe of ſatisfaction, and married him in conſequence; but in ſign-

ing

ing the black contract, as many ill directed women had done before her, ſhe ſealed a warrant for her living death.

Here reflection on this common tranſaction is inevitable; and it ſhall have the next chapter intirely to itſelf.

CHAP. III.

OF MARRIAGES.

HOW many valuable women have been doomed to miſery and want, diſeaſe and death, by untimely marriages? becauſe the reſpective parties have ſpoken to, and looked at each other in a maſk; and ſhowed themſelves the reverſe of what they truly are. The paſſiveneſs of innocence and inexperience on one ſide, with the action of art, diſſimulation, and treachery on the other, too often ſacrifice at the altar, where faithleſs vows are made in the face of heaven, fit only to eſcape the lips of fiends in hell. If a woman commit herſelf to this improper

ſacrifice

ſacrifice with ſincerity, looking only to the aſſuranced joys and comforts of wedlock with a man ſhe does not downright hate, many may be her excuſes. By his goodneſs and kindneſs ſuperadded to her own deſerts he may influence her friendſhip, if not her love; and the idea, if not the reallity of happineſs, may be known between them; but where ſeparate views of partial intereſt and convenience prevail, where each ſolicit the ſuffrage of the other in diſguiſe, little elſe can be expected than hatred, diſguſt or at leaſt indifference.

If marriage be a dictate of nature or an inſtitute of Providence, ſurely it muſt be becauſe nature to anſwer her own important purpoſes calls for the junction of the ſexes, and the nurture, care and protection of their offspring. Thus indeed may its formalities be deemed holy, ſince

all the principles of nature are ſo, or we arraign the wiſdom of Providence and condemn the ways of God to man. In no other light can it be viewed, and though the church hath arrogated a power to call it holy, not excluſively in the engagement, but in its interference through all its hoſtile conſequences, ſuch is the wiſdom of our temporal laws that they treat it only as a civil contract. Well then might it be if it were entered into by a civil mode. In ſuch a caſe, one of the ſacraments would never be profaned; the altar would be uncorrupted by unmeaning proteſtations, and ſacred writ be ſpared the office of ſolemnizing vows to impious or unprepared parties, who like thoſe that receive the tokens of the Eucharist without a firm reſolution to lead a new and virtuous life, receive little ſhort of their own condemnation.

To

To enter into a ſtate wherein the whimſy-formed angels of the earth ſoon prove to be mortals, and love itſelf, however inſpired hath for its object only fleſh and blood, by an eccleſiaſtical form, may agree with thoſe ſerious well intentioned parties who are able to give and take for better and for worſe, and make allowances for human failings; but conſidering the imbecillity of mankind, their mutual deceptions, the fluctuation of their likings and diſlikings, and their ſhort ſightedneſs, it may, without the ſmalleſt apprehenſion of reproach be thought that a contract in itſelf no more than human and legally civil ſhould never be made in a church. The ſame good effects in regard to the parties, their children, and the deſignation of their property, would be ſecured to them; and thence an abſolutely civil inſtitution, inſtead of a holy one, would do honor

to our community. The bible would no longer be made the teſt of truth, but perjury and falſehood would meet the due of their crimes with more ſatisfaction.

At all events, and although miſery, the lot of all, is often known in marriage, it muſt be allowed, that it is not as an inevitable effect; but rather from thoſe failings of humanity, thoſe external circumſtances that affect, the happineſs of a ſingle life. A man or woman who cannot be pleaſed with any thing, who hath a mind unbent to the common accidents of earthly intercourſe, is almoſt as unfit for exiſtence as a married ſtate. But if the parties have kindred ſouls, very rarely known, they may verify the poet's * words, and render bliſs ſecure. Deſirous of improving their happineſs they will look be-

* Thompſon in his Seaſons.

yond

yond the ſpeckled ſhell of human things and make marriage the ſpring but not the grave of love. Well attempered minds is beauty in all her ſhapes, and thus underſtood flies abaſhed from the approaches of paſſion, where allurements are calculated to betray without honor to protect. With thoſe whom ſympathy attracts, it almoſt leaves the coarſer tie of human laws unthought of

"Unnatural oft and foreign to the mind,"

while love, excited by ſymmetry of form, is tranſient, and, like a ſhadow, vaniſhes in the embrace. A noble Author hath ſaid that peace or wretchedneſs in marriage ariſes from cohabitation. This is true. Love ever and anon haſtens from the ſight of human formalities; and violated or ill requited, will turn itſelf to hate. In ſuch a ſituation ſenſeleſs indifference cannot be found. Patience may endure much; but a ſeries of ill

returns for good, will ultimately, like the conſtant dropping of water on a ſtone, wear out meek ſubmiſſion, and make the ſufferer, like Mrs. Wrighten, give way to calamity; then ſeek relief at the expence of reputation, with all the ill founded ſurmiſes of a babbling world.

CHAP-

CHAP. IV.

REFLECTIONS ON MRS. WRIGHTEN'S MARRIAGE.

THE marriage of Mrs. Wrighten being eſtabliſhed by a holy form, ſhe preſently found herſelf expoſed to a numerous off-ſpring, for whom no other proviſion was made than what muſt be drawn from her profeſſion; and ſhe, reflected on the chains of bondage ſhe had heedleſsly forged for herſelf. She conceived ſhe was more blameable in her own mind than if ſhe had waited for time to influence her natural inclination in a ſtate of freedom. In the former ſhe was convinced a woman might in vain proteſt or remonſtrate, when power abuſed had broken the links of affection, and ſhe was dragged

dragged to the embraces of lordly appetence, to perpetuate her miſery, in violation of the tendereſt feelings of her ſex and the ſacred rights of Nature. In the latter had ſhe renounced virginity without interrupting the ends of providence, ſhe could have reſumed her conſequence, and done juſtice to herſelf if her paramour had proved ungrateful, or ſhe found it no longer expedient to gratify herſelf or him.

Unfortunate is the woman who wants reſolution to ſacrifice a real though temporary happineſs, to the certain though laſting miſeries which the pride or prejudice of her friends would kindly provide for her. If ſhe does not rebel againſt the laws of nature nor venerate Chaſtity* as a Deity, it is becauſe ſhe ſees them daily trampled on and legally foreſworn at the foot of Hymen's

* Chaſtity is not the teſt of virtue; nor is every virtuous woman chaſte.

altar;

altar; it is becauſe ſhe knows that love is to be the chief buſineſs of her life, and that good ſenſe will enable her to prefer to falſe friends and a perfidious world the tender regard, the winning aſſiduities of him whoſe virtues captivate her heart, whoſe love ſubdues her pride; and by raiſing a mutual flame becomes the only object of her wiſhes. The conſcious purity of her ſoul and the innocence of her life will repel the pointleſs ſhafts of ſlander. Unbound to the performance of duties which her generous heart diſclaims, the freedom of her will gives luſtre to her choice in ſpite of the ſeverity of female reflections; while that ſhameleſs creature who from mercenary or ambitious views, receives to her arms the man ſhe diſlikes, if not deſpiſes*, will glory in her

* For naught avails the ſpecious name of Wife,
A maid ſo wedded is a W—— for life.
LYTTELTON.

guilt!

guilt! Can this be called honorable while abhorrent nature groans under the foul oppreſſion, and inſulted modeſty indignant calls on Infamy to vindicate her wrongs*? No. The painful conflict between love and ſhame, the crimſon bluſh ſhall ſave our country women from reproach, while tomorrow's bride in vain ſhall call on marriage Rights to ſanctify her joys; rank luſt has bought them at the expence of gold and terrene honor; deceitful joys that leave wide room for ſorrow and remorſe†.

* Whene'er diſguſted ſenſe the joy diſowns,
Nature beneath the ſoul oppreſſion groans;
'Tis then a virtue to deſert that bed
To which in virgin charms the bride was led.

† Souvenez vous toujours que meme dans le mariage le plaiſer n'eſt legitime que quand le deſir eſt partagé.

ROUSSEAU.

CHAP-

CHAP. V.

BIOGRAPHICAL RESUMED.

MRS. Wrighten, now a married woman, encreaſed her public fame and enlarged her profits. She became a Mother likewiſe by him, ſhe rather choſe to make kind to her by her ſedulous attention to his intereſt, than to teaze by her diſapprobation of his frequent incivilities. He had prophaned by marriage vows before he knew her, and one of her firſt diſcoveries was, that the funeral of his departed wife, whom he had deſerted with two children was paid for from the profits of his living one *.

* Mrs. Penchard her Mother is witneſs to this fact.

Surrounded

Surrounded afterwards by a family—her mind bent towards her buſineſs in the Theatre, and interrupted in it by the moroſeneſs of Mr. Wrighten, whoſe every diſpoſition was ungenial with her own, ſhe was more than fully employed in providing for the firſt, attending to the ſecond, and ſoftening the laſt. A wedded life of ſix or ſeven years made her ſenſible that ſhe had better not have married at all; or that if the ſociety of a man were neceſſary to her happineſs, or uſeful in her ſituation, better would have been that ſhe had met the protection of a Gentleman and a man of honor and humanity, who would have ſmooth'd her time by his endearments, and gratefully have treated her for benefits received. But ſhe had now a combination of cauſes to lament her fate, and ſhe ſtrove to comfort herſelf under it by the chearing hope of ſometime ſeeing a pleaſing change.

As

As it was not in her power to recall her marriage vow or undo her civil contract, ſtamped by a faſlely called holy ceremony, ſhe ſtifled the remembrance of it to prevent the pain of reflection; and knowing that ſhe had the authority of ſcripture to entitle her to a divorce, the uncertain, the expenſive, the difficult road that our laws, both ſpiritual and temporal, have marked out whereby to attain it, compelled her for a time to make the worſe appear the better. As a Mother, her natural affection attached her to well diſpoſed children. As a wife, ſhe ſuffered what ſhe could not alter, and while as premiſed ſhe conſidered marriages at large productive of more evil than good, more anguiſh of heart, than any thing like domeſtic harmony; ſhe was lothingly acquainted with the truth that marriages are never made in heaven; and that thoſe only are right which are entered into in the cool medium of reaſon,

under

under the freedom of the will, where nothing but love can anſwer love, and riſes ſuperior to all the bindings of ſuperſtitious and craftty ceremonies.

Although Mrs. Wrighten had not any perſonal beauty to attract, every one who had ſeen and heard her in public or private, admitted her to be an affable and entertaining woman. It was always her ſtudy to pleaſe. This from the earlieſt period of her marriage, which took place ſoon after ſhe was of age, has been by her huſband her greateſt crime. In her, good humour and pleaſantry were always unfriendly to haughty ſullenneſs in him. Wedlock indeed may have made them one fleſh, according to an ancient and trite maxim; but Nature had made them two diſtinct perſons in the qualities of their minds. Diſcord and diſcontent were his guardian harpies, while conſcious

ſcious ſatisfaction was ever in company with her. Yet he was gloomy and offenſive, notwithſtanding in hurling herſelf away with him ſhe had nothing to gain by it but every thing to looſe. He at the ſame time had every thing to procure from it, and nothing to be deprived of. She had a handſome ſalary, and he as an inferior performer had ſcarce any ſalary at all. A bad of all bad huſbands he lived upon her earnings, and perpetually mortified her by his unkindneſs. Had he poſſeſſed a good heart, and been commonly affectionate or diſtantly civil, ſhe had ſo far put the keys of heaven in his pocket, that he might have employed them to mutual advantage, and lived happily and reſpectably with her and her children. He was deſtitute of the finer feelings of ſenſibility that vibrate the ſoul with the moſt poignant relliſh, and after frequent and open

communications with other women he grew jealous of her conduct. Like Envy, he gnaſhed his teeth at her, and growled the more, as he found leſs to growl at. Scarce a man young or old that came to her dwelling, even while ſurrounded by young children, but he ſuſpected, and the intervals of this ſelf-tormenting paſſion, which in him was ſordid in the extreme, were only while he was with her in thoſe companies to which he was led by his views of intereſt on the approach of his benefits. On this occaſion he was all things unto all men. He ſmiled and ſmiled again. He was a Diſſenter of every deſcription among Diſſenters, a Papiſt among Roman Catholics, a Jew among Iſraelites, a Churchman or a non con. as beſt quadrated with his peculiar advantage. This alſo made him pine and ſupplicate, fawn and flatter as a lover, and

with

with crocodilean moaning, delude Mrs. Wrighten into his unhallowed hands.

A continuation of deceptive coarſe and vicious behaviour, which delicacy forbids particularizing, imbittered her private hours and made his company intolerable. His converſation would have diſgraced a bordel. His manners were groſs and filthy. His looks hideous, and altogether he was at laſt ſucceſsful in making himſelf the ſole object of her deteſtation, until ſometime in the year 1786, after beſtowing upon her every vulgar name and epithet in his power, which he had repeated, like a bell ſtriking alternately the hours of a clock, he forced her from his houſe at midnight in Kennington-lane. It was with the moſt painful reluctance ſhe was thus hurled from her daughters, on whoſe dear account ſhe had ſubmitted for years to the mal-feaſance of their Father.

Thus placed in the open ſtreet at the dead of night by his outrage, unable to gain admittance to her home, ſhe fled to her Father's at Newington for private refuge.

By this action he executed unto her a bill of divorce, ſealed and delivered by his proper hand. According to the law of Moſes laid down in the pentateuch, if a man put away his wife from his houſe when ſhe finds no favour in his eyes, he ſhall write her a bill of divorce and ſhe may be wife to another; and as this wiſe legiſlator tells us that the end of the law is obedience, Mrs. Wrighten, from the moment of her departure out of Mr. Wrighten's houſe, felt herſelf diſcharged of every obligation to him; yes, even divorced from him by his own act and deed. It is true the text from Moſes ſpeaks of uncleanneſs, which St. Mathew conſtrues into fornication, as a reaſon why a man ſhall thus

put

put away his wife. If he have it not he will be unjuſtified, and cauſe her to commit adultery. This uncleanneſs which in Hebrew means matter of nakedneſs, or according to the Evangeliſt, fornication, muſt precede the putting away as a reaſon or as a poſitive fact. It muſt not float as an idle ſuſpicion in a groveling mind: it muſt be eſtabliſhed on the broad baſis of undoubted truth, or the putting away a wife by her huſband, is a tranſgreſſion of the law of God, and ſhe may enforce reſtitution of conjugal rites. But wounded by this additional ſtab, this putting out of her houſe without uncleanneſs, Mrs. Wrighten conceived it a releaſe, a receipt in full, and of all demands from the beginning of the world to the day of the date, and the end of time. He had thrown her away, and abandoned her, as one who caſts his treaſure on the face of the

earth, leaves it for the finder to poſſeſs as the lawful occupant.

It may be aſked why Mr. Wrighten caſt away from him this *treaſure trouve** at a midnight hour, and called her ſervants to witneſs the tranſaction; and it may be thought by all thoſe who know not the fact, that nothing but the higheſt of provocations, an amalgamation of actual uncleanneſs, fornication, and adultery, with a tincture of every crime of human invention on her part, would induce him to the commiſſion of it. The truth is, thoſe corroding ſuſpicions he had long harboured of her infidelity were now blown into full blaze. Like every maliciouſly jealous man by a woman he abuſes, he rather ſuffered them to dwell with him as a viper than generouſly chace them up to a needle's point. Fearful

* A law term, meaning treaſure found.

of

of proving their cruelty and injuſtice, or purſuing her at every turn to detection which would annihilate them, he cultivated and cheriſhed them. Unmindful of his own uncleanneſs he made them the cauſe of her expulſion. She had gone home from her buſineſs at the Theatre in a Hackney coach. Her Chariot ſhe had ordered to be put up becauſe the evening was rainy, and ſhe chooſe not that her horſes ſhould be expoſed to the inclemency of the weather. This was her grand crime which in the fowl map of his imagination ſtood out like a promontory in the tempeſtuous ſea of his ſuſpicions. Her houſe was converted into a criminal court; her huſband was her accuſer; her ſervants were her jury; himſelf ſat as Judge, and laſtly he filled the honorable office of her executioner. The ſentence

of this arbitrary Preſident being compleated, and the poor criminal driven to the houſe of her father for ſhelter, he received her with kindneſs. The heart of this venerable hoary headed Sire wept blood at every pore. He had long ſympathized in the woes of his daughter. He ſtruggled to conceal his grief, until it burſt out in an ebullition of tears. His next conflict of mind was on what to do for her. His houſe was at her ſervice, and ſhe herſelf would have diſregarded the wretch who had forced her there, aye even have rejoiced at her liberation from the worſe than common ſide of his priſon, had ſhe not left behind her three unoffending daughters. Theſe ſhe wanted with her. She ſent for them. She preſented their unhappy Father with the olive branch, *Pacifereque manu ramum pretendit olivæ*,*

* Virgil.

and

and offered for their ſakes to provide for them and give up to him half her income. He indignantly refuſed the whole. What could ſhe do? Let us enquire in the next chapter.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VI.

BIOGRAPHICAL CONTINUED.

OH ye virtuous fair, take Mrs. Wrighten under your ſoft protection. Let her aſk you whether after the unjuſt and unmerited abandonment of a mercileſs huſband, which poſſibly was a favour he for the firſt time obligingly conferred on her, ſhe ſhould have attempted a return to his regions, which were next to infernal; or make the beſt of her condition with her father, whoſe open hand of compaſſion offered aſſiſtance to place her in the enamelled mead's of Peace's bright domain; where in all the calms of conſcience ſhe could enjoy that ſatisfaction un-

undiſturbed by a huſband's baſeneſs, which all the world beſide could not beſtow? Thoſe only who feel the ills they deſcribe can beſt give an anſwer, while cold apathy by a warm fire may drawl out, " She would " do well to go home to her children. It is " ſhocking to deſert them." So it is. " Their father's anger muſt ſoon abate, and " no doubt he would receive her with a re- " lenting heart." Not ſo indeed. He had made this home horrid to her. Her children were dear to her, and ſhe offered to provide for them; but his adamantine heart was inclined to diſtreſs her. She hence avoided the miſery ſhe had for years undergone with him, in the hope that any terms of ſeparation would be preferable to her living longer with a man who delighted in tormenting her. Theſe, like her betters, ſhe looked for in contempt of that anti-

quated

quated but common practice among married people to be found in their ſeeming fondneſs to aggravate each other, yet live together in ſpite. This may be a proof that man and wife are one fleſh that cannot be divided. But Mrs. Wrighten who, like her betters alſo, knew too well what it was to regret the bondage ſhe had ſubſcribed to, was of a different opinion. To her a man and his wife had always appeared diſtinctly two perſons in a myriad of characters, and nothing under heaven could conſolidate them into one, but a perſevering union, a perpetual ſummer of congenial hearts. In this ſhe was ſupported by the noble law of man, which daily puts aſunder thoſe whom the devil had joined together, to anſwer his own wicked purpoſes. Had God condeſcended to interfere in their junction, man dared not preſume to break it, becauſe

every

every thing immediately out of his almighty hands is good and right. Under his benign influence therefore Mrs. Wrighten determined on a life of ſeparation, as a diſtinct perſon from her huſband.

While every overture was playing to the ſerious opera of bringing him to equitable terms, which, conſiſtent with his character, he ſhrunk from, it was unknown to moſt of her acquaintance whether ſhe were living. The hollow trump of rumour made her at one time deſperate enough to deſtroy herſelf; at another, it put her under the protecton of the Duke of Norfolk. Then it ſent her abroad, and at laſt found her ſafely retreated with Mr. Pownal, at his houſe in Southwark. He was proprietor of an extenſive manufactory there, and was but little known to her huſband. He had been ſerviceable to him as a friend, and was now

marked

marked out as an enemy. He was a ſingle man, and a houſekeeper of reputation. He was affable, hoſpitable, friendly and benevolent. She acknowledges with pleaſure many civilities ſhe received from him, and deſerted as at this time ſhe was, unknowing where to turn for ſafety, accident brought him acquainted with her refuge at her father's, and of her huſband's turning her from his houſe. Here, at her own requeſt, he paid her a friendly viſit, and offered her any juſt aſſiſtance in his power. He adviſed conciliatory meaſures, but Mr. Wrighten was hardened. He had not a tear for pity, nor a hand open to charity. He would not hear, and conceiving Mr. Pownal to be her favourite, every thing on his part to appeaſe diſquiet and pave her way back to his houſe, aggravated his outrage and enflamed his vengeance. He hired perſons to watch her in

her

her walks. He planted them in lodgings near her father and her friends. In vain was his ſearch. She was retire, and to her he was loſt. She avoided him as a peſt and determined to go abroad, to change her name, and chace him from her mind until he loſt his head in oblivion.

At this time her aged father was aggrandized into an object of his indignation. He was ſuſpected to be the banker and truſtee of his daughter. She was thought to have made up a handſome purſe at her huſband's expence, and that ſhe had placed it in the hands of this good old man. Mr. Wrighten courageouſly took him by the collar and dragged him into chancery, where he charged him with the fact and called for diſcovery. It was honeſtly denied, the bill diſmiſſed, and the complainant paid coſts to the defendant. Mrs. Wrighten ſtill out of

his

his reach, he extended his arm to her friend. He flattered himſelf he had ample evidence, and he brought an action for damages. This gentleman being publicly ſpoken of and charged with concealing her in his houſe, advertiſed in the newſpapers a declaration of the contrary. She admits that on the launch of a balloon in the grounds of his manufactory ſhe viſited him to ſee ſo novel an exhibition; but moſt ſolemnly denies ſhe ever was concealed in his houſe. Concealed ſhe certainly was, and it was in the only proper place, the houſe of her father.

Served with this action for damages by Mr. Wrighten, Mr. Pownall, who is reſpected by all who know him, felt ſome concern that in return for what he deemed an act of friendſhip, he ſhould be involved in a law-ſuit; and knowing it could have nothing but malice for its foundation, he prepared for his defence.

defence. Mr. Wrighten began to reflect on what he had done. He had driven a wife from him, and caſt her on the wide world as *treaſure trouve.* He had divided his home-ſtall, and deprived himſelf of the profits of his better ſelf. His receipts were leſſened ſix or ſeven hundred pounds a year. He was left with two daughters, and the pangs of remorſe now touched him with anxious wiſhes for the return of their mother. She whom he had abandoned and thrown away he now claimed. The property he had renounced he aſſerted a right to, as if he had loſt it by accident, and diſcovered it in the hands of the finder. Self only was the ſelfiſh conſideration, and ſelf only directed her to flee from him as to another Zoar.

He purſued his action, and his complaint was this,—that Mr. Pownal had taken and carried her away; known her criminally,

 aſſaulted

aſſaulted and impriſoned her, broken and entered his houſe, and ridden in his chariot.

To charges ſo ridiculous and abſurd the plea of not guilty was given, and the parties being at iſſue, Mr. Wrighten was dared by all the boldneſs of irreſiſtible truth to proceed to trial.

To the firſt charge, that Mr. Pownal had taken and carried her away, ſhe confeſſes that he waited upon her at her houſe in Kennington-Lane ſome time in 1786. It was in the middle of the day. Her ſervants and children were preſent, and in conſequence of a general invitation from Mr. Wrigten himſelf. His viſit was ſhort, for Mr. Wrighten was not at home, and he took his leave.

To the charge of aſſaulting and impriſoning her, ſhe confeſſes too, that ſhe once took the liberty, with many other perſons,

to

to go on his grounds to gratify her curiofity in the afcent of a balloon. This was all. She was not taken away or detained by him. She was at full liberty to act as fhe pleafed, and fhe was never affaulted by him.

To the charge of entering Mr. Wrighten's chariot, nothing can be faid, but that Mr. Pownal, having for fome time been indifpofed by illnefs, availed himfelf of an opportunity to fleep in the air at the houfe of his brother in the Vauxhall road; and walking on a certain morning in the neighbourhood, he cafually met Mrs. Wrighten in carriage. Being very near her houfe, fhe ftopped and alighted to afk him how he did. She walked with him a few fteps, when in the inftant he was about wifhing her a good morning Mr. Wrighten met them. "What, "madam," he faid to her, "I have now

"diſcovered you." "You have, indeed," ſhe made anſwer, "in the open road juſt "entering the door of my houſe." Mr. Pownal, alarmed that Mr. Wrighten had not ſpoken to him, walked back to his brother's, and thus ſeeing the ſparks of jealouſy, did not call on either of them again; but Mr. Wrighten, fearing he had offended him by his rudeneſs, waited on him at his houſe, where he left his compliments, with his hopes of ſeeing him ſoon after.

To the charge of criminally, knowing Mrs. Wrighten, it is the idle formation of his diſtorted fancy. There was neither the faint ſhadow of a proof of it, nor a ſingle circumſtance beyond what has been premiſed, on which the moſt prying ſuſpicion could faſten. The whole was imaginary, ariſing from the ſingle fact that Mr. Pownal had caſually met his wife and once paid her

a viſit

a viſit when he happened to be from home; and that ſhe afterwards called upon him to ſee a balloon.

With this plain caſe, ſuperadded to a body of evidence tending to prove Mr. Wrighten's ill behaviour for ſeveral years, Mr. Pownal went into court at Guildford in Surry, ſatisfied that on a trial he ſhould obtain a verdict in his favour. Unfortunately Mr. Juſtice Heath was taken ill and adjourned the hearing of the cauſe to a future day.

In the interval Mr. Wrighten, deſpairing of ſucceſs, and apprehenſive that a public diſcuſſion of his conduct in a court of juſtice might ſubject him to public deriſion, hurt his daughters, and injure himſelf in the theatres, beat up a parley. Mr. Pownal readily liſtened, and a truce was agreed on. Mr. Wrighten *dropped his ſuit and paid the coſts*. While he piped Mr. Pownal danced,

and *he took back his wife on her own conditions* *. Her daughters hung round her heart, and on their account ſhe made up her mind to return to them rather than him, with whom ſhe *ſtipulated not to cohabit* †. To them ſhe went from her father's, but ſad and pitiful to tell, it was impoſſible to waſh the black moor white, or make the leopard change his ſkin. In the ſaint ſhone forth the demon; compunction was dead and Richard became himſelf again. Mr. Wrighten forgot all his penitentials and his promiſes of amendment. He renewed his former behaviour, and nothing remaining whereby ſhe could poſſibly find peace, ſhe voluntarily left him.

There are more ways than one to effect a

* This is an unexampled circumſtance, and proves that there are huſbands capable of any thing.

† An ample proof that all ties of affection were broken between them, and that they would not long live hus together.

given

given purpoſe. He had before expelled her his houſe by manual violence. He now hurried her from it by making it a hell to her, and ſhe again fled to her father's; again offered terms of ſeparation in his favour, which again and again he rejected. As if devoted to deſperation and ruin he ſpares nothing to attain them. To diſtreſs her, he diſtreſſes himſelf. In purſuing her, he picks his own pocket and fails in his attempts. Why elſe refuſe the undeſerving boon of the major part of her earnings and deliver up her daughters to her protection? Where is the woman, however great her patience, tame her ſenſibility, ſubmiſſive her temper, and cold her feelings, who would ſtamp the black dye of her unhappineſs with a man who had improved her hatred by his dirty manners, his hypocritical pretences, and the impurity of his perſonal conduct?

Where is the woman who, after twenty years acquaintance with his filthy behaviour, would quietly ſubmit to a continuation with a man who brought diſeaſe to her bed, and perfidy and injuſtice to her home? If there be one it muſt be one from whom reaſon, ſentiment, and taſte, have fled abaſhed, and in whom melancholy phrenzy only remains.

Mrs. Wrighten knows well ſhe is of little weight in the great ſcale of humanity. She knows her own and her huſbands inſignificance, which ought perhaps to have ſkreened him from her notice. They are both human beings, and ſhe in particular may have feelings as exquiſitely tender as any lady of the higheſt rank, who has been like her, injured and deceived by an ungrateful man. If Mrs. Wrighten left her huſband of her own free will ſhe is juſtified within, and looking around ſhe wants not the ſanction

of

of exalted characters for what ſhe has done.* As a woman, though a public ſinger, ſhe may be commiſerated in her miſadventure, while he, though low in life, may be ſentenced in uplifted minds to condign puniſhment for his folly and impolicy. She long looked for the charming hour when Conſcience would bring him to a ſenſe of his raſhneſs. Callous in his ſins he dreams of appropriate rectitude, and after conviction complains of cenſure. He calls himſelf injured beyond all men; but no one hears him, and he is enraged. In his ſtory he favors himſelf, and Mrs. Wrighten is infamous. The truth is not in him, or ſhe would bluſh at his tale. He has eſtabliſhed for a certainty, that how perfect ſoever is the general ſyſtem of Nature there exiſts

* She however diſdains all examples; and reſts her juſtification on the foundation of conſcience.

one

one among her imperfect ſons in whom centres all the deformities of moral degeneracy. Her warm inſulted blood which he had ſtudiouſly provoked at laſt recoiled, and wearied out by ſuch an inſtance of Providence, ſhe found that the fartheſt ſhe could be from him would beſt promote her peace. The willingneſs of her heart to doubt at every turn that he was leſs unworthy than he was, often betrayed her into the weakneſs of diſputing with his obſtinacy. She ſaw that a ſacred ne plus was aſſigned by divine juſtice beyond which he could not proceed. This was her departure from his houſe and ſupremacy. Where protection was wanting, allegiance was deſtroyed, and where there is no fealty, there is no rebellion. In abdicating his government and abhorring his uſurpation, ſhe has not taken arms againſt him. She was wounded by him to the

bottom

bottom of her heart and ſelfreleaſed from his domination, ſhe hath ſued for peace with him by every means; but war, war, war is the cry, the diſmal knell of him to whom nature with niggard hand has dealt out her endowments, and after many fruitleſs attempts to obtain it ſhe quitted him FOR EVER *.

Upwards of four years have ſince elapſed in which ſhe has ſought repoſe in poverty, partly with her Father, partly in retirement at home, and partly abroad. She declares herſelf highly indebted to Mr. Pownal for his unremitting friendſhip in her days of want. In the fulleſt conſtruction of words, Mr. Wrighten is not only the Author of her preſent ſituation; but is the manager, the theatre, and actor in all its parts; and that the performance might be complete, he hath

* Her daughters were of an age to take care of themſelves.

been

been prompter alſo. Why on the contrary refuſe half her earnings, and to deliver up her daughters to her care; but becauſe he glories in his perſecution and derives a pleaſure from pain. She hath tendered him to every reaſonable extent, and it is in the power of her Father to produce a paper written by himſelf, wherein he pronounces his own unqualified permiſſion and conſent that ſhe is at liberty to *commit adultery Seventy times ſeven.** Kind Mr. Wrighten; but his kindneſs in this particular was of a local nature. It was confined to mere ſelf; and the profits were to be excluſively his

* This paper is in the hands of Mr. Mathews. It proves Mr. Wrighten's total diſregard for his wife, and that he thirſted only for the profits of her profeſſion.

But, on proof of this written permiſſion to commit adultery, what damages would a moſt rigid jury give, if the fact were eſtabliſhed? *Damnum abſque injuria.*

own

own. He caſt an anxious eye to ſeven hundred pounds a year *landed ſecurity*. This he called for more than once. Hence the courteous reader can have no difficulty in drawing a juſt concluſion from premiſes ſo hideous. But hurt by her ſequeſtration from all theatrical employ in England, where ſhe was ſure he would monopolize her pay, ſhe no longer could ſuſtain a life of inactivity, and reſolved to ſeek an engagement ſome where. She at length found one in North America, where ſhe hopes and doubts not ſhe will meet with encouragement, and a manſion of peace—

She is now arrived there; but in the hour of her embarkation at Gravesend, Mr. Wrighten thought proper to ſerve Mr. Pownal with a new action on her account, notwithſtanding the non pros. of the former and his payment of coſt*. Such an action is

* It is ſuppoſed that this action is brought as the reſult

manifeſtly brought for lucre, and (as Mr. Pownal was himſelf going abroad) in the truſt that he could not defend it; and that therefore the malevolent Plaintiff would obtain againſt the hoſpitable Defendant a verdict by default.*

Mean mean man! There are the ſame grounds on which to follow up this action as the other, namely none at all. Every action muſt be groundleſs where there is no proof to ſupport it, and Mr. Wrighten is again

reſult of a conference between Mr. Wrighten and Mrs. Freeman, Mrs. Wrighten's ſiſter, who hath ſaid he offered her fifty pounds to give evidence againſt Mr. Pownal, ſo as to entitle him to heavy damages.

* Mrs. Wrighten would willingly acquit the Attornies concerned in the inſtitution of this ſuit of any improper views; but nevertheleſs aſks them to what end it was inſtituted in this manner againſt a Gentleman whom they knew was going abroad in the very moment, and could not be preſent in the defence of it?

Wrighten

ſet at defiance in the production of any. He has darkened the atmoſphere about him with rays of ſupreme contempt, extending from the weſtern ſhore of the Atlantic ocean to the Hay-market theatre, and they follow him like his ſhadow wherever he goes; diverging from the minds of Mrs. Wrighten and Mr. Pownal to melt him into nothing.

Of the fate of this tiny ſecond action Mrs. Wrighten's readers and the public will be informed in due ſeaſon. It will be oppoſed, and heaven ſend it a good deliverance *.

* Of all problems in the law, there is not any more difficult of ſolution than this. In what ſenſe and in what proportion is a man entitled to damages for the adultery of his wife? That this is forbidden by the decalogue is undoubted, but the meaſure and degree muſt depend on all the circumſtances that induced its commiſſion by the reſpective parties. A man is entitled to damages from him who has ſeduced his wife with whom he had ever lived in harmony and

and love. Here they operate as a punishment for a tort of the highest nature. But how far a man who treats his wife ill, and forces her on the world, ought to have damages from him who treats her well, and to whom she flies with affection, must be left to the superior judgment of the reader. Certainly when an action is brought on this subject, it seems obvious that a large sacrifice is made for the sake of damages as the principal object. If they be excessive they ought not to be paid, any more than excessive fines for crimes. The law does not consider crim con. as a crime, but a civil injury, (and surely none can be greater) for which damages may be recovered; and these may be encreased or diminished according to the rank of the parties, their connection, the seduction, and the danger of a spurious offspring which a husband, however, bad, is bound in settlement to provide for. Where the reverse of this is the case, though the tort is the same the action will lie, but damages will be small. Yet after all the offence in general arises in the *wife* whose husband recovers damages of a man for what *she* has done.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VII.

HYPOTHETICAL.

MRS. Wrighten preſents her moſt reſpectful compliments to her liberal readers, begging the favour to reverſe the medal for a moment, by way of hypotheſis, and to put the caſe, that the amiable Mr. Wrighten hath full proof of his cara ſpoſa's cohabitation with another, then aſk the queſtion, whether *ſhe* be blameable and *he* entitled to damages? The tongue of generous philoſophy, the eye of penetrating wiſdom that views things as they are in the abſtract, their aſſociation and conſequences, will all concur in proclaiming the negative. Com-

mon charity will excuſe a woman, treated and abandoned as Mrs. Wrighten knows herſelf to have been, for indulgences which are only criminal in proportion as they involve herſelf or others in miſery or danger; and common ſenſe will determine that no man is entitled to pecuniary * reparation for what he has been the cauſe of, more eſpecially ſo, when he has dropt one action, on payment of heavy coſts, and taken back to his houſe the ſuſpected adultreſs. Is a woman, after every tye of affection is broken by an abuſe of her confidence, the diſeaſe of her perſon and the wringing of her heart, to live a recluſe in penury? Is ſhe not to have a friend to ſooth her, to aſſociate with and aſſiſt her—to chat and read with

* It has been ſaid that there have been huſbands who have gladly received the miſerable pittance of their wife's proſtitution.

her

her—to ſympathize with and even love her, when ſuch a one comes in her way, who commands her own by his goodneſs to her? Is ſhe, like the ſtricken deer, to weep in ſolitude or die by the aſſaults of the herd? Forbid it heaven, forbid it truth! as well might we ſtrive to change the courſe of nature, upbraid the work of God, and unite the antipodes. Is a man furthermore to call on a court of ſolemn juſtice and an Engliſh jury for damages where none have been ſuſtained? Forbid it reaſon! as well might a reward be expected where there was no merit, and for every arrow planted in the boſom of her he has juſtly loſt.

Far be it from Mrs. Wrighten's intention to juſtify by the colour of language, vice and infamy, or the aberrations of any of her ſex, who may have wantonly ſwerved from the paths of virtue and duty. Thoſe

who, as married women, living in the very bosom of happinesſ with good huſbands, diſhonour and leave them, ſhe judges guilty —yes, as much ſo as thoſe vileſt of all vile men who, nearly after breaking the hearts of good wives, harraſs them in their retreat, and ſue for damages againſt their friends who ſuccour and perhaps cohabit with them.

Thus viewing the queſtion of guilt or innocence in all its bearings, unforgetful that reaſon and cuſtom may wiſely preſcribe laws to nature, Mrs. Wrighten does not plead the cauſe of all men. Many there are who fly from women that have gratified them at the expence of themſelves. Theſe are deſpicable. The preſent enquiry extends only to her own ſex, who, like her, have been untimely married. She flatters herſelf that her readers will go along with her in this apology for her conduct, and in their judgment

ment be mindful that they may be judged in their turn *.

Barring the infirmities of human nature, ſhe truſts that in a general account of good and evil, reſpecting her virtues and her errors, a handſome balance will be found in favour of the former. Conſcious of no harm ſhe hath nothing to turn pale at †. Her charity and good-will towards others are not without teſtimony. Her natural temper for pleaſantry and her ready endeavours to oblige, both in public and private, are well known. As a wife, mother, miſtreſs, neighbour and friend, to the utmoſt of her poor ability, nothing ſtares her in the face, harrows up her ſoul, or

* Judge not that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge ſhall ye be judged.

Chriſt's Sermon.

† *Nil conſcire ſibi nulla palleſcere culpa.* Virg.

freezes her blood *. And although a husband exists whom she has here held up and laughed to scorn, she heartily laments the occasion. It is a work of compulsion; and happy had it been for her if she had never known him; but knowing him to her sorrow, as she hath done, she sincerely pities and forgives him. This, after all, is the least she can do for him, leaving it for the stings of conscience to punish him here for all his misdeeds to her, and for the Almighty to chasten him hereafter.

* Shakespeare.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VII.

CONCLUSION.

MRS. Wrighten, having thus attempted an apology for intruding on the public a ſketch of her life and conduct, as a married woman, ſhe aſſures every one whom it may concern, ſhe had no vengeance to gratify. In the delineation of her caſe ſhe has ſtudied to be as general as poſſible, without deſcending to inferior minutiæ below the dignity of biography. Every thing libellous ſhe deteſts, and ſhe hath opened no ſecrets unfit to be told, nor has ſhe tranſcribed any ſlander whatever. She vouches for the

truth of what ſhe has unfolded, and if it be provoking it is confined to herſelf. If any thing of a libel can be found in this pamphlet ſhe is the author, and her huſband, if provoked, is at liberty to proſecute her. It can excite his wrath againſt no other perſon, and let him indict her if he pleaſe. The traverſe will be novel between man and wife, and ſhe will plead to iſſue, not doubting but an honeſt jury of married men, who by a late admirable law can determine crime or no crime, will honourably acquit her. Mr. Ridgeway can be guilty of publiſhing only, which has been determined no crime, and as ſhe was pregnant of her apology with which ſhe went her due time, this induſtrious bookſeller attended her in its delivery. He was her midwife, and her month being expired, ſhe hath left her bantling with him to nurſe, while ſhe is

gone

gone to America in ſearch of health, peace and competence.

Should it be aſked why Mrs. Wrighten came forward at all, it is becauſe her patience was exhauſted. She has borne much, and ſhe was deſirous of undeceiving the public as much as poſſible. When a woman leaves her huſband, a thouſand preſumptions may be raiſed againſt her, and it may well be believed it is not on the ſcore of his goodneſs to her.

She fully acquits Mr. Pownal of every imputed guilt with her. Her faults whatever they are, and the beſt are not without them, are her own. She exculpates him, and ſhe cannot but feel ſome uneaſineſs that a Gentleman to whom ſhe owes much, ſhould be purſued in two actions for what ſhe takes wholly on herſelf. She may have given an appearance of guilt againſt him, but

but never the reality, and ſhe is in duty bound to exonnerate him, who for his kindneſs to her, when given up by her huſband, has become the object of his reſentment. Whatever be the event of the ſuit, and ſhe is almoſt certain it will fall dead born to the ground; be it for ever remembered that ſhe brings Mr. Pownal in not guilty of any thing tortious by her. On the contrary, ſhe calls out to the higheſt pitch of her voice, that his good behaviour to her ſets the memory of her huſband at an eternal diſtance.

Lord Kenyon would do well, and every other Judge, to relax his moral ſenſes on the trial of a cauſe of this kind, and infuſe into his adjucation a little philoſophy. Let him enquire into the conduct of the man to his wife, and the conduct of him to whom ſhe fled. He will then be able to diſcriminate the real boundaries of criminality and to feel

the

the weight of vice. If a huſband make himſelf hateful; and accident carry an unhappy wife into the protection of another who treats her well; who is a ſtranger to him and did not ſeduce her, ſurely his lordſhip will lighten the name of the offence, and, remembering that Nature will prevail, never attempt to alter her by exceſſive damages.*

Thoſe ſober readers who may think Mrs. Wrighten wrong in thus defending her friend at the expence of her prompter, are informed with all due deference and regard, that ſhe cannot be brought to think ſo herſelf. She is a woman, a compound being of fleſh and ſpirit, neither a deity nor a devil, and nothing whereby a woman is affected can be indifferent to her. She has been affected in the extreme, and ſhe believes ſhe could be

* *Naturam expellas furca licet tamen uſque recurrit.*
HOR.

only

only wrong in ſuffering her friend to be hanted and vilified without declaring in the face of the world that his only fault is kindly helping her up, when thrown down by her huſband — in kindly ſeeing her to a place of ſafety when he had caſt her away, and in kindly aſſiſting her when he had left her to ſtarve. It is not for this he ſues him. It is not for *her* loſs; but it is for damages, where none have been incurred.

To defend her friend, and juſtify herſelf are the ends of her apology, wherein if ſhe hath ſpoken freely of marriage in general, and her own in particular, it is from the fulneſs of her heart and the teſt of experience. She has advanced nothing without the aſſignment of a reaſon, and when ſhe touched on wedlock ſhe meant not to ſpeak in favour of vice. To throw off the moraliſt and aſſume the Philoſopher is ſometimes proper.

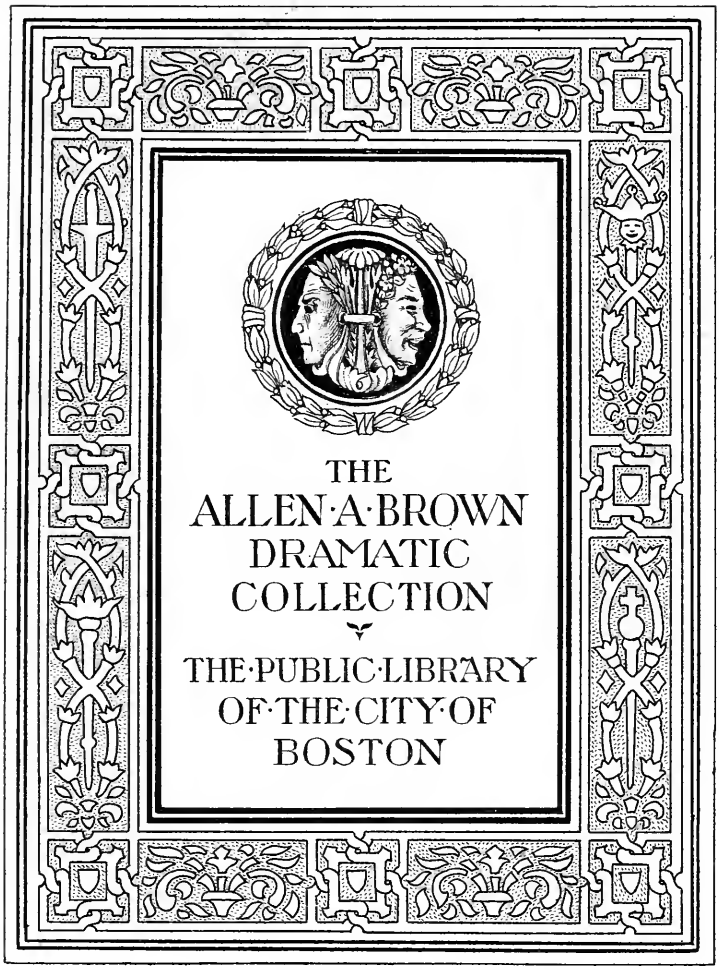
Pro-

Proſtitution is horrible, and wedded proſtitutes are pitiable above all.

Mrs. Wrighten does not condemn marriages. She has only ſhown their conſequences. She does not extol a conjugal ſtate between the ſexes, unwarranted by the laws of cuſtom which may have the effects of a ſecond nature. She has only looked at parties in both ſituations; and in the one, ſhe has found Love to have been mutually felt previous to their union, while in the other, it has appeared as a duty, but not otherwiſe impreſſed on their hearts.

In regard to herſelf ſhe has endeavoured to be candid, artleſs, and explicit, and whatever may be thought by the men, the beſt friends in general to the fair, to the women ſhe makes her beſt curteſy, taking the liberty to whiſper in their ears, that if they had been in her ſituation they would have felt and acted as ſhe hath done.

No T. 56. 156



EDMUND·H·GARRETT·1910·OPUS·65